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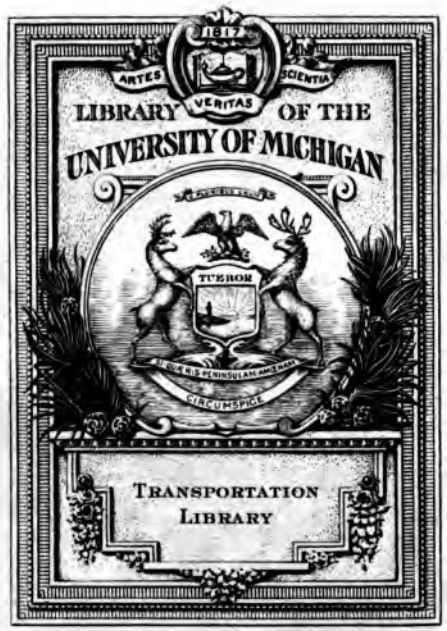
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# REPORT

OF

THE COMMITTEE

TO WHOM WERE REFERRED SUNDRY PETITIONS, PRAYING THAT THE

*

## Schuylkill Permanent Bridge

SHOULD BE MADE A

## FREE BRIDGE.

BY MR. GOODMAN, County of Philadelphia.

READ IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES APRIL 8, 1834.

HARRISBURG:
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# REPORT, &c.

Mr. Goodman from the committee to whom the petitions of citizens of this commonwealth were referred, praying that the Schuylkill Permanent Bridge should be made a free bridge, and the remonstrances thereto, REPORT:

That they have attentively considered the different memorials and remonstrances referred to them, relative to declaring the Schuylkill Permanent Bridge at Market street a free bridge, and would present the following as a brief view of the facts, connected with the proposed measure:

The president, directors, and company for erecting a permanent bridge over the river Schuylkill, at or near the city of Philadelphia, were incorporated under an act of assembly, passed the 16th March, 1798.

On the 28th of March, 1800, the city of Philadelphia, conveyed to the bridge company the present site of the permanent bridge, with all its appurtenances and privileges, for which they received the sum of forty thousand dollars.

The bridge erected on this site, consisted of two abutments, two piers, and three arches. The first stone of the eastern pier was laid September 5, 1801, that of the western pier, December 25, 1802.

The bridge was declared open for passengers and transportation, on the 1st day of January, 1805, and the cover was begun and finished in the same year.

This bridge cost, including the purchase of the site, $300,000.

The *coffer dams*, foundations, and other subaqueous works, consumed a great proportion of the expenditures.

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|---|---|
| The capital stock of the company is | $195,659 |
| The difference between that, and the actual cost of the bridge is | 104,350 |
| Whole cost, | $300,000 |

This difference or debt was liquidated, by applying the whole of the income of the company for several years to its payment. The effect of this was, that from the commencement of the bridge until the year 1812, inclusive, only two dividends, amounting together to five and a half per cent., were declared and paid to the stockholders, who had so meritoriously contributed their funds towards the erection of this great and public work, and that during the whole period of twenty-nine years, from the opening of the bridge on the 1st of January, 1805, they have received but $5 56$\frac{2}{29}$ per cent. on the capital stock of $195,659, and if the preceding year, from 1800 to 1805, when the expenditures were made are added, it will decrease the rate of interest received still more.

There are two other bridges across the Schuylkill, below the Fairmount dam. The one commonly called the Upper Ferry bridge, consists of a single arch with two abutments, and leads into the district of Spring Garden. This bridge is owned by a company, incorporated under an act, passed the 28th March, 1811. The other the Grays Ferry bridge is a floating bridge, and leads into the townships of Passyunk and Moyamensing, and is private property. These three bridges form the present direct modes of access from the country west of the Schuylkill into the city of Philadelphia, into the incorporated districts of Spring Garden, Northern Libertias, and Kensington on the north, and the incorporated townships of Moyamensing and Southwark on the south.

The memorials may be thus classed:

1. The memorial of the select and common council of the city of Philadelphia, transmitting the following resolutions:

1. Resolved by the select and common council, that it is expedient the Schuylkill Permanent Bridge be a free bridge.

2. Resolved by the authority aforesaid, that a memorial be transmitted to the Legislature of this State, requesting them to take the necessary measures for providing for the appointment of such number of disinterested persons as they may think proper to appraise the said bridge, and determine the value thereof, agreeably to the provisions of an act, entitled: "An act to authorize the Governor of this commonwealth to incorporate a company, for erecting a permanent bridge over the river Schuylkill, at or near the city of Philadelphia, approved March 16, 1798."

2. Memorials of citizens, which may be subdivided into three classes or sorts:

1. One praying for the appointment of commissioners to appraise the Market street Schuylkill Permanent Bridge, in strict accordance with the charter, in order that the parties who are interested may ascertain the sum to be paid, and adopt measures to make it as well as the Schuylkill Upper Bridge, free.

2. Another set concluding like the first, but leaving out the upper bridge.

3. Another set praying for the appointment of appraisers, in order that the friends of a free bridge may take means to raise funds for that purpose.

The remonstrances against the measure, consists of

1. The remonstrance of the commissioners of the incorporated township of Moyamensing.

2. The remonstrance of the commissioners of the district of Spring Garden.

3. The remonstrance of the commissioners of the district of the Northern Liberties.

4. The remonstrance of the president and directors of the Schuylkill Upper Bridge.

5. The remonstrance of the owners of the Grays Ferry Bridge.

And of the memorials of citizens of the city and county of Philadelphia, which are of two kinds, the one of citizens of the city of Philadelphia, remonstrating against this bridge being made free at the expense of the city of Philadelphia; the other of citizens of the city and county of Philadelphia, remonstrating against all or any of the three bridges being made free at the expense of the city, county, or districts, and accompanied by statements of the debts and taxation of the city, county, and districts, a synopsis of which is annexed to this report:

The joint committee of councils appointed to inquire into the expediency of making the Schuylkill Permanent Bridge at Market street a free bridge, in their report, made on the 6th March, 1832, use the following language:

"Your committee have selected that part of the report of the board of directors, with the view of showing what might be the probable expense of making the bridge free, from which it would appear, that if that mode of ascertaining the value of the bridge be adopted, which produces the smallest sum, [$264,127 50,] *and if the city were empowered by the act of Assembly, under which the bridge company hold their charter, to make it a free bridge, the sum required for that purpose would be too large to be taken from the funds of the city, in the present state of the finances.*"

"The ONLY MEANS which your committee are aware of for accomplishing this desirable object, is by a direct application to the State Legislature, requesting that body to take the necessary measures for making it a free bridge; and as the State has reserved this right, and there can be no doubt but the Legislature who passed the act incorporating the company, intended the right should be exercised at the time therein mentioned, your committee can see NO IMPROPRIETY in councils adopting the following resolutions, which they recommend to their consideration."

These resolutions are the same which, with a slight change of phraseology, accompany the memorial presented by councils to the Legislature, at the present session. It may, therefore, be safely assumed, that neither the city of Philadelphia, nor the county of Philadelphia, nor the districts of Spring Garden, Northern Liberties, Kensington and Southwark, nor the township of Moyamensing, can or will free, at their expense, the Permanent Bridge, the Tpper Ferry, or Gray's Ferry Bridges.

The language of the memorials in favour of freeing the bridge, is certainly ambiguous in asking simply for a valuation and appraisement; but as the power of the Legislature depends on the words and meaning of the act of 16th March, 1798, it is necessary to consider what is the fair construction of that act, in order to see in what manner the prayer of the memorialists can be accomplished.

The 10th section of the act of the 16th March, 1798, provides "that when a good and complete bridge is erected over the said river Schuylkill, at or near the city of Philadelphia, at a place deemed most convenient, as hereinafter mentioned, the property of the said bridge shall be vested in the said president, directors and company, and their successors, during and unto the end of twenty-five years, to com-

mence from the time when the bridge is completed." Then, prescribing the rates of toll, which are exceedingly low, and "v are so regulated that no more than three-fourths of the toll deman in other cases shall be taken for the transportation of the produ the country, and for those laden with manure, half toll; empty ages of burden to pass for half toll; and also prohibiting the cre of the bridge without the consent of the owners of the ground on side of, and contiguous to the said river where the said bridge be erected, the said section proceeds as follows:—"And whe said tolls shall exceed 15 per cent nett annual profit, the excess compose a fund for the redemption of the bridge so as to ren free, save that there shall always be a small toll or other reven keeping it in repair; this excess shall be laid out in bridge sto productive funds, and the dividends of annual product shall be added to this fund; and all private donations for freeing the b shall be received and invested in like manner; but if by the oper of the fund herein proposed, there shall be a sufficient sum to fr bridge at a period less than the said twenty-five years, th shall be redeemed and become free on the stockholders being the appraised value thereof, and of the profits for the residue o said term of twenty-five years, which may then be unexpired "and if the said fund shall not be adequate to the purpose last tioned, the Legislature may, at the expiration of the said twent years, declare it a free bridge, (providing at the same time the n of keeping it in repair) and the company shall be obliged to take sum of money therefor as shall be allowed on a fair appraisemc indifferent persons;"—"the like appraisement shall take place the sinking fund is adequate to the redemption of the bridge, an establishment of a revenue, if a toll be thought not more eligib keeping the bridge in repair; but if the said bridge shall not deemed and paid for as a free bridge before or at the expiration said term of twenty-five years, the said corporation may and continue to hold the same on the terms of this act beyond the term, and until the same shall be redeemed and paid for in m herein directed."

This section evidently contemplates three distinct periods for ing this bridge. The first is before the expiration of the twenty years, from the completion of the bridge, and depended upon th mation of a fund to be composed of the excess of tolls above 1 per cent, nett annual profits, and of private donations for freein bridge. If this fund should be sufficient at a period less than tv five years, then it was to become free, on paying the stockholde appraised value thereof, and of the profits thereof for the resi the said term of twenty-five years.

No one of the events here contemplated has ever taken plac the nett annual profits of tolls has never reached any thing lik fifteen per cent specified, and no private donations have ever bee ceived for freeing the bridge. There therefore, never has been s fund as was contemplated by this part of the tenth section, an

Legislature of 1798, was entirely mistaken as to the rate of profit to be derived from this work.

The second is at the expiration of the twenty-five years, when the Legislature has the power to declare it a *free bridge*, providing at the same time the means of keeping it in repair, and providing also for the payment of such sum of money as shall be allowed for the said bridge, on a fair appraisement by indifferent persons; that is, by disinterested persons mutually selected by the parties.

All these are to be cotemporaneous, and the effect produced would be to make the Permanent bridge at Market street, a "*free bridge*," on which no toll could be levied, even for the purpose of keeping it in repair, which must be provided for from some other source.

If, therefore, the Legislature deem it expedient to use this part of the tenth section, they must make it a *free bridge*, that is, one on which *no toll*, however small, can be exacted. They must pay its value, and they must provide a fund, or means for keeping it in repair.

sinking fund, (t after the expiration of twenty-five years, when the hat is the fund formed by the excess above fifteen per cent nett annual profit and by private donations,) is adequate to the redemption of the bridge and the establishment of a revenue, if a toll be not thought more eligible for keeping the bridge in repair.

Your committee are therefore of opinion, that the real question submitted to the Legislature under the provision of the act of 16th March 1798, is, whether the state of Pennsylvania will declare this bridge a free bridge at their own expense, providing out of the state treasury the sum required to pay for its appraised value, and also such annual sum as may be necessary for keeping it in repair forever.

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| The State of Pennsylvania, on the 30th November, 1824, owed, | $ 1,840,823 73½ |
| And on the 30th November, 1833, the same state owed (including the remainder of the loan per act of 16th February, 1838, not then paid into the treasury,) the sum of | 21,527,786 32 |
| Showing an annual increase of debt, since 1824 of | 2,187,440 28½ |
| And a total increase of debt, in the short space of nine years, of | 19,686,962 58½ |

The completion and the necessary extension of the canals and railroads of the state, the improvement of the interior by bridges and turnpikes, the support of colleges, academies, and other useful institutions, the improvement and enlargement of penitentiaries and prisons, and the establishment and maintenance of a general system of education, agreeably to the solemn injunction of the constitution will necessarily cause a corresponding increase of the state debt for several years to come.

If the state were to free the Schuylkill Permanent bridge at Market street, it would be obliged, in common justice to the populous districts of the county, to purchase and make free the Gray's ferry and Upper ferry bridges, both of which present very advantageous modes of access at present from the country on the west of the Schuylkill.

Your committee cannot of course estimate with accuracy the sum that would be required to accomplish their object, but assuming for the purpose of argument the original cost of the Market street bridge at its present value, the cost of freeing the three bridges may be thus stated :

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|---|---|
| The Schuylkill Permanent bridge will take to free it at its original cost, | $300,000 00 |
| And the purchase of the two other bridges, say | 300,000 00 |
| | $600,000 00 |

To be added to the debt of the state, besides ten thousand dollars or a greater sum annually to maintain and keep the three bridges in repair forever.

If these bridges are freed, then all the bridges and turnpike roads throughout the state are entitled to the same favour, and the state canals and rail roads instead of affording a revenue for their support, and creating a fund finally for the redemption of the immense state debt necessarily contracted for their erection, must be maintained, repaired, and extended, and the interest of our debt paid, by an increased direct taxation of every description of property, in order that those who use and profit by them may pass toll free.

Your committee therefore offer the following resolution.

Resolved, That the committee be discharged from the further consideration of the subject.

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Statement of debts and taxation of the city and county of Philadelphia and districts.

## THE COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA.

| | |
|---|---|
| The county of Philadelphia were indebted on the 1st of January, 1834, for loans, | $251,300 00 |
| And for outstanding orders, claims and damages awarded, | 225,100 32 |
| Making a total debt of | $476,400 00 |

The taxes of the county, including the state tax, were for 1833, sixty cents in the hundred dollars on real estate, being the maximum of taxation, which the inhabitants of the county would bear.

This percentage produced the sum of $207,439 66

## DISTRICTS.

The taxes are for 1833, and the debts are as they stood on the 1st of January, 1834.

### DISTRICT OF SPRING GARDEN.

| | |
|---|---|
| Loans, permanent, | $140,000 00 |
| Temporary, | 32,553 99 |
| Total, | $172,553 99 |

TAXES.—Corporatton, 80 cents; lamp and watch, 20 cents; county and state, 60 cents; poor 34 cents. Total—$1 94 in the $100.

### DISTRICT OF THE NORTHERN LIBERTIES.

Loans, $137,000 00

TAXES.—Corporation, 60 cents; county and state, 60 cents; poor, 34 cents. Total—$1 54 in the $100.

### DISTRICT OF KENSINGTON.

Debts about, $70,000 00

TAXES.—Corporation, 75 cents; county and state, 60 cents; poor, 34 cents. Total.—$1 69 in the $100.

### INCORPORATED TOWNSHIP OF MOYAMENSING.

Loans, temporary and permanent, $48,000 00

TAXES.—Poor, 40 cents; road, 40 cents; lamp and watch, 40 cents; pump, 25 cents; schuylkill water, 20 cents; county and state 60 cents. Total—$2 25 on the $100.

### DISTRICT OF SOUTHWARK.

Loans, $150,000 00

TAXES.—Corporation, 60 cents; county and state, 60 cents; poor, 34 cents. Total—$1 64 in the $100.

## THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

The taxes for 1833 were, city, 75 cents; county and state, 60 cents; poor, 34 cents. Total—$1 69 in the $100, and these produced

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|---|---|
| City, | $193,636 08 |
| County and state, | 159,661 50 |
| Poor, | 93,390 79 |
| Making a total of | $446,688 37 |

Paid in direct taxation by the citizens of the city of Philadelphia, on their real estate—and the whole of this immense revenue (with the exception of the state tax one mill in the dollar, amounting to $43,-592 57,) was expended in the support of the government of the city and county, and of the corporation of the guardians of the poor.

The citizens of the city of Philadelphia have, however, besides this direct taxation, to contribute annually a very large sum in addition to the treasury of the State, from various sources. The following estimates are for 1833, and are taken either from the books of the county treasurer, or the Auditor General's report, and when the accounts of the city are mixed in with the rest of the county, so as not to be capable of separation, it is assumed, that under each head the city contributes two thirds, and the rest of the county the remaining one third.

The city of Philadelphia, therefore, paid into the State treasury for the year 1833,

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| For tavern licenses, | $7,200 00 |
| Tax on bank dividends, | 16,770 92 |
| Duties on dealers in foreign merchandize, | 19,202 18 |
| Collateral inheritances, | 64,184 90 |
| Tax on personal property, | 12,261 65 |
| Tax on offices, | 8,059 32 |
| Tax on writs, &c.. | 3,574 62 |
| | $131,253 59 |
| To which add the above amount of taxation, | 446,688 37 |
| And it gives the very large sum of | $577,941 96 |

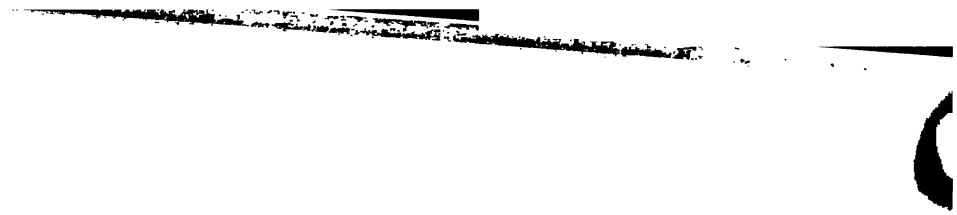
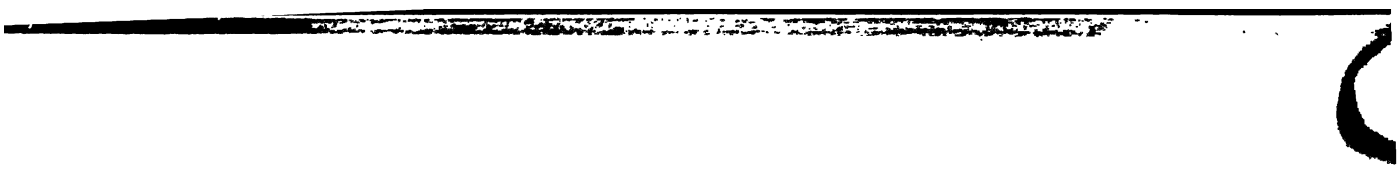
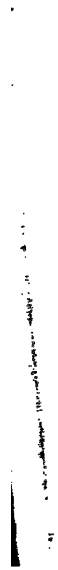
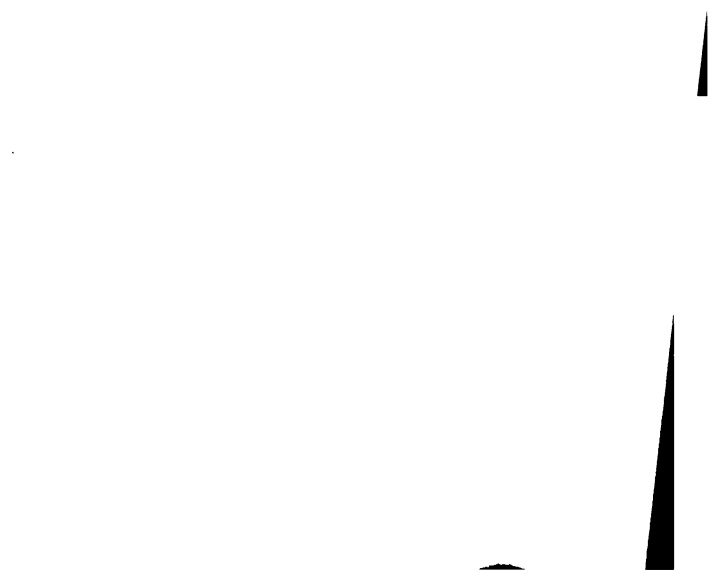
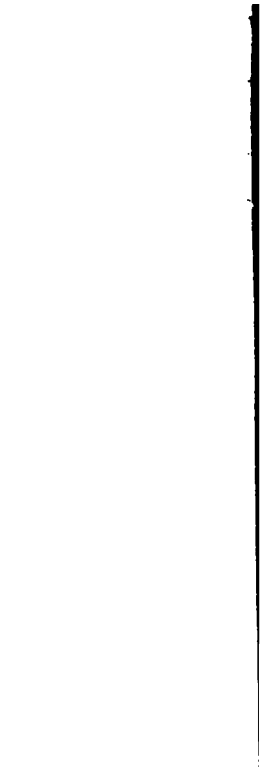
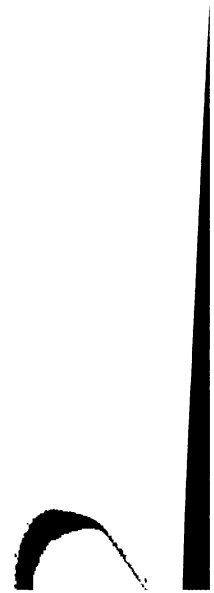
Raised annually out of the city proper which consists of a population of a little more than eighty thousand souls, and living within the narrow compass of two square miles.

If the auction commissions and duties, which are almost entirely paid in the city of Philadelphia, were added to this sum, it would make another item of at least $90,000.

But in addition to this immense load of taxation, the city suffers the pressure of a very heavy debt, which is composed of:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. The debt of the city itself, | $2,110,600 |
| The annual interest of which is $110,231. | |
| 2. Its proportion of the county debt of $476,400 32 say, | 284,000 |
| 3. Its proportion of the funded debt of the guardians of the poor, of $650,000, say | 438,043 |
| Making a grand total of real city debt, of | $2,832,643 |
| If to the city taxes set forth as above, and amounting to (including the auction estimate of $90,000,) | $667,941 96 |
| We add the taxes of the incorporated districts which from the suburbs of the city, and may be taken at $\frac{1}{3}$ of the city, (exclusive of auction) $577,941 96 we have | 192,589 32 |
| | $860,547 28 |

Making an annual disbursement of nearly nine hundred thousand dollars for taxes, by a population of about 170,000 souls.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The aggregate of the permanent and floating debts of the city and liberties, may be stated thus: City proper | | 2,832,643 |
| Incorporated districts and county of Philadelphia. | | |
| County of Philadelphia, | 476,400 | |
| Spring Garden, | 172,553 | |
| N. Liberties, | 137, | |
| Kensington, | 70, | |
| Moyamensing, | 48, | |
| Southwark, | 130, | |
| | | 1,033,953 |
| | | 3,866,596 |

Making an aggregate total of nearly four millions of dollars.